

CITY OF NEWARK, NJ'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Mildred Crump -- November 12, 1997

Q: Good afternoon This is Glen Marie Brickus. I'm here with Councilwoman Mildred Crump. Mildred was kind enough to come to my house for this interview, and I appreciate that very much. Today is November 12, and it is now 2:50, ten minutes to three o'clock. 12:50, I'm sorry, 12:50, ten minutes to one o'clock. And again, Mrs. Crump, I thank you so much for having come. And we will now begin our interview. First of all, I need to have your full name.

Crump: My name is Mildred Joyce Coleman Crump. And that Crump is spelled with a C.

Q: And your date of birth.

Crump: My date of birth is November the third, 1938.

Q: And your place of birth.

Crump: My place of birth is Detroit, Michigan.

Q: What is your current occupation, and how long have you been there?

Crump: My current occupation, I am happy and proud to say, is Councilwoman at Large, serving the City of Newark. I was elected to that position, and sworn into that position on July 1, 1994, which makes it two years and four months.

Q: Did you have another job before you became councilperson?

Crump: Yes I did. One I loved dearly. I was a Braille teacher and was one for thirty-two years.

Q: And what precisely did you do as a Braille teacher?

Crump: Well, I taught Braille, which is, you know, the most obvious, but we also. We did more than that actually. We helped students and young adults manage a sight reduction from those who were partially sighted to those who were totally blind. My primary focus, of course, was instructional, but we provided whatever other kinds of support systems that we needed for the students and their families.

Q: What is your education background?

Crump: I attended college in Detroit, Michigan, a very famous college. At the time that I decided to become a Braille teacher, there were only seven universities nationwide that offered the specific courses that I needed. And one was, fortunately, in Detroit, where I was living. And that was Wayne State University.

Q: Whom did you marry, when and where?

Crump: I was married to a very wonderful man. His name was Cecil Crump. We married, we met in college in Detroit, and married in Detroit. And he was born in Denville, Virginia. And we moved to Newark because he got transferred.

Q: How did you meet Mr. Crump, and how long did you know each other before you were married?

Crump: Well, I met him in college as I already indicated. And I can honestly say. This is a funny story. When you talk about love at first sight, I'm an example of that. First time I saw him, I said that's for me. And I chased my poor husband until I caught him. But it was worth it. And I had a lot of help from the university. They thought we were gonna make an ideal couple. And we dated for nine years, believe it or not, before we were finally married.

Q: What kind of work did Mr. Crump do?

Crump: Mr. Crump was, he was a linguist. And he also had a degree in engineering. But he also had an incredible talent for languages, and while we were in Detroit, he was advisor to the foreign students at Wayne State University. Subsequently went to work for AT&T, and ended his illustrious career in corporate America as one of the directors for international communications for AT&T.

Q: Did you have children?

Crump: Yes, we do. We have two wonderful, wonderful children. Larry Crump, who is now a second year law school student at Rutgers University, after having worked in corporate America for five years he decided that he's rather go back to pursue his original dream. So he's a poor, undernourished, overworked student. My daughter Sherry is a psychologist in the city of Atlanta, Georgia. She works for Emory University.

Q: Were they born, were your children born in Newark?

Crump: Oh yes. They were both born right here in the City of Newark.

Q: What was your father's name and where was he born?

Crump: My man was an incredible man. His name was Edgar Coleman. And he was born in a little town called Winter Park, Florida. His family subsequently moved to Georgia. I often credit my father, when people say to me how well I speak, I credit my father with that facility and that ability. My dad, while he wanted to go to school and where were the economics of that time had to come out in seventh grade. But if you knew him, he spoke like a king. And that was because he was self-taught. And I'd get punished faster for making a grammatical error than I'd get for doing something that was mischievous.

Q: What was your mother's maiden name and where was she born?

Crump: My mother's maiden name was Johnson. Mattie Lee Johnson. And she was born in a little town called Cuspert, Georgia. My mother's family was, how can say this nicely, was one of the influential black families in that area. My grandfather was highly respected. And so she taught me a great deal in life.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Crump: Yes I do. I have currently living one brother, his name is James Coleman. One sister, her name is Jean Coleman Smith. And, unfortunately, I have one brother who is deceased. Came out of the Vietnam war, unfortunately, quite dysfunctional and was mugged and killed.

Q: What was your father's occupation, Mildred?

Crump: My dad was a union organizer. And that's where I got my start in politics. He was a union organizer for sanitation workers in the city of Detroit.

Q: And your mother's occupation?

Crump: My mom was pretty much a homemaker. Although she did domestic work to help support the family. And that certainly was not unusual for black families at that time. She stayed home for as long as she could. And my dad lost his job, actually that's what happened. And so she decided to go back to work to help pay the bills.

Q: Have you ever changed your name, if so, why did you change your name? For example, membership in a religious faith or an ethnic group or political organization or that kind of thing.

Crump: Well, I won't say I changed my name, but about the age of eighteen I started dating a



young man who was Muslim. And what I did for a short period of time was stop using my last name. I remember my slave name as we used to call it. And I became Mildred X. But once Charles and I stopped dating, that was over.

Q: Very interesting. Did others in your family change their names?

Crump: No one. I was the rebel with a cause at the time.

Q: When did you first decided to come to Newark?

Crump: Actually it was decided for me. My husband and I were still dating. We knew we were going to be married. But both of us were extremely involved in the community and in the academic, my husband especially, in academia. And when AT&T hired him, I guess they saw that his talents were such that he needed to be at another level, and so they transferred him to New York. And when I came out to look for an apartment, I knew that I could not live in New York City. The tall buildings were too high, and people didn't say excuse me, please or thank you as I was accustomed to. So on our list was the City of Newark. And I remembered that city because it competed with the high school that I attended for the number one high school in the country. That was Cass Technical High School. And I said to my husband, honey, isn't that where Wickwake High School is? And we found out that it was. And we moved here for the school system.

Q: You say you came from Detroit to New York.

Crump: We were supposed to move to New York.

Q: I see.

Crump: But I just couldn't hack it. I was a midwestern hick. Used to buildings that were ten stories, maybe twenty stories, and that hundred story. Kind of hard to believe, but that was true

back in 1965.

Q: How did you prepare to leave Detroit to come to Newark?

Crump: To be absolutely honest, it was not easy. It wasn't that hard because I was coming with my husband. But it was not easy because I was leaving behind my entire family. I had to prepare more emotionally for the move than I did in terms of physical, you know, the physical packing and stuff like that. But that's pretty much what happened.

Q: What time of the year was that?

Crump: It was in the fall. We married September the eleventh, 1965, and we were in Newark September the twentieth of 1965.

Q: Did any family members or employers or anyone try to persuade you not to leave Detroit?

Crump: Oh our families, they were like besides themselves. And my family that is. And my husband had a cousin there who was very dependent upon him. And, of course, because of what I did for a living. I was a Braille teacher while I was there and very active in my church and the community, they were all unhappy to see us, both of us go. But fate is fate and so we stuck to it.

Q: Was this your first trip of some distance from you home?

Crump: No. I was one of the fortunate persons. By the age of twenty-one, I had been to Europe, been to Lebanon, all over the United States. So it wasn't the travel or the unfamiliarity.

Q: Did you or your family know anyone in Newark before you came here?

Crump: No a living, breathing soul did I know. [Laughter] That made it even twice as hard.

Q: Did anyone tell you about Newark before you came?

Crump: No they didn't. No they didn't. We simply moved here almost literally in the blind. Newark was on the major bus routes to New York City where my husband worked, where his office was. So we just, we moved here.

Q: So you didn't have any preconceived ideas of what it would be like living in Newark or what Newark was like before you came?

Crump: No I didn't. Other than that it was a town where smart kids lived. Because of Wickwake High School standing and, you know, and ranking for high schools.

Q: How did you travel when you left Detroit?

Crump: We traveled by car, and that's because we had to bring our wedding gifts. And, what do you call it, the moving van followed us, and we just couldn't get off of Rte. 1 & 9. We drove around for about five hours trying to find a way off of Rte. 1 & 9 so we could get to 455 Elizabeth Avenue, which was then the Wickwake Park Towers, so that we could find our apartment. We weren't used to the kinds of egresses where you, service lanes. We were midwestern hicks.

Q: Did I ask you what year you came to Newark?

Crump: 1955.

Q: What was the trip like from Detroit to Newark by car?

Crump: It was very pleasant. My husband and I had traveled from Detroit to his home in Virginia. We were both long distance drivers actually. And certainly the pleasure of his company, you know, made the trip most enjoyable. I hope he felt the same way.

Q: How long did the trip take?

Crump: Oh God. The trip that was supposed to have taken about thirteen hours actually took about eighteen or nineteen hours. Because I was telling the truth. It took us about five hours to find out how to get off Rt. 1 & 9 onto Hanes Avenue. We just couldn't figure it out. We drove around and around and around. We often laughed about that.

Q: This is a rather personal question, Mildred. How much money did you bring with you?

Crump: Well, probably if I know my husband, enough for us to hang on until we got ourselves settled. We were both gainfully employed. I was a teacher, and, of course, he was an employee of AT&T. And at that time, those were most respectable positions. So whatever we had, we used up part of it stopping to eat while we were trying to find our way off of Rte. 1 & 9.

Q: Other than the problem with trying to find your way from Rte. 1 & 9 to Hanes Avenue, were there any other interesting stories or anecdotes that would remember about the trip?

Crump: One of the things that does stand out in mind, even to this day, is that as people, we would wander off the highway. And the people were so friendly and so anxious to help. They were not distant or cold, and that made it a lot easier for us, you know, in terms of our first introduction to the people here.

Q: In stopping along the highway between Detroit and Newark, did you stop at any facilities like eating facilities or?

Crump: I know we did. Yes.

Q: Did you come across any segregated facilities?



Crump: No. Not that I can recall. But we were coming from the northern part which was supposed to, you know, to be an enlightened community in terms of racial harmony and opportunity to, you know, just across the country, you know, to the east coast. We did have to travel south as we did when we went to visit his family.

Q: Now, the good part. What happened when you arrived in Newark and who met you?

Crump: Well, no one met us other than the moving van people. We did receive a phone call from the relocation people at AT&T. But because we were moving to a community where we literally knew no one, we were pretty much on our own.

Q: What personal effects did you bring with you?

Crump: We brought all of our furniture that we had accumulated and all of our wedding gifts. The moving van, and this is not to brag, but the moving van man said to us, he said, he had never seen so many wedding gifts in his entire life. We were very blessed and very fortunate, and people were very generous and kind to us when we get married on September the eleventh. We had to move all that stuff here.

Q: Had you planned, did you plan to return to Detroit after you had come to Newark?

Crump: Absolutely. We were scheduled to be here for a two year rotation. Period. And after the two years, we were supposed to rotate back to Detroit. But every two years, they kept saying to my husband, can you stay a little bit longer, can you stay a little bit longer? Would you stay a little bit longer? So what was supposed to be a two year temporary residency became our permanent home.

Q: Did you know anyone else who came from your home town to live in Newark?

Crump: No. Not at the time. We did subsequently find out that my mother had some second cousins here. But that was not until, you know, further on down the line.

Q: Do you still have any mementos or materials such as photographs or luggage or trunks that you used to help you move from Detroit to Newark?

Crump: Well, we certainly have pictures. It was the cast of characters, if I can use that expression, getting the van loaded, unloaded, you know, up in our new apartment. We were so proud of ourselves. We were so young, innocent.

Q: What kind of housing did you, you have obviously secured residence before you came to Newark.

Crump: Yes.

Q: What kind of housing was that?

Crump: It was an apartment. And now let me tell you about the first incident, when you ask about any racial incidents. The first thing that occurred to us in Newark to us was most unusual. It was race biased. My husband sent through the mail the deposit on an apartment at the Colonnade which was located in the North Ward. And, of course, the name Crump calls to mind a different complexion. And when I arrived that August before we were to be married to look the apartment over and, you know, to make some decorating decisions, and we went to the management office and said, hi. My husband said, I'm Cecil Crump. Well, when they saw us, they said, oh, we're terrible sorry, but we rented your apartment. And it was heartbreaking. We understood what the deal was. That they did not expect blacks, let alone black blacks, and we were dark skinned, real obvious. And so we had to scurry around, and due to the kindness of someone that we really did not know, his name was Frank Tucker, he vouched for us and we were able to subsequently get an apartment at 455 Elizabeth Avenue. But our first introduction to

Newark before moving was that experience.

Q: How many times did you return to Detroit or to Cecil's home since you came here?

Crump: Oh. Any number of times. I've lost count. When my husband was alive, we tried to go at least once a year. And the same is true of Detroit. Sometimes I went more depending on the occasions. Both our families, we rotated the holidays. But we went either south or the midwest.

Q: You answered my next question, where did you first live in Newark. Well, how long did you live at, was it 455?

Crump: Yes.

Q: How long did you live there?

Crump: We lived there for a little better than two years. I've already said, my husband and I, we were both midwestern hicks. While housing was considered expensive in the midwest, it was extraordinarily expensive. And so by the time our rent reached two hundred and twelve dollars for this gorgeous apartment which we had. It was absolutely stunning, fully equipped. We decided that we had to move. We were paying too much rent. Two hundred twelve dollars. [Laughter] And so we started looking around for another place to live, and we did find one.

Q: What was your impression of your first apartment? You just said that it was gorgeous.

Crump: Oh, it was. And we had a swimming pool, we had all kinds of just wonderful amenities. We had a terrific apartment association or a tenant's association. There was just a, they had socials for all of the tenants in the building, and we got a health club, you name it. A dentist was even in residence there. It was wonderful.

Q: So it was just the two hundred and twelve dollars.

Crump: Just the two hundred and twelve dollars. [Laughter] We were used to paying a hundred, a hundred and twenty-five. A hundred and thirty-five was expensive. So.

Q: What was the neighborhood like where you first moved when you came to Newark?

Crump: It was absolutely, incredibly beautiful. Trees and grass, and it was right across the street from Wickwake Park, which was maintained in a quality fashion. And it was a delightful place in which to live. The area, it was safe. You could walk.

Q: So was it, at that time, was it a combination, like commercial and residential area?

Crump: It was primarily residential. That area still remains residential even to today.

Q: What other kinds of people lived there?

Crump: It was a melting pot. It was a real melting pot building. All ethnicities, all ages. And it was a wonderful place.

Q: Tell me again why you settled at 455?

Crump: Well, number one, we weren't allowed to live at the Colonnade. And I've always been grateful extra fashion. They didn't want us, you know. And the Park Towers. It encouraged different kinds of people to live together. And Mrs. Warren, who was the management agent, used to say to us she wanted her building to be a mosaic. All the different kinds of people who lived there.

Q: Where did you next live in Newark?



Crump: We moved to 116 Park View Terrace. And I told you that was because two hundred and twelve dollars was much too much rent for husband and I. And we moved into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fisher. They were a wonderful Jewish couple. She taught me how to make apple strudel and chicken soup and chopped chicken livers. And that was at 116 Park View Terrace in Newark. And we rented the second floor of their home. It was, you know, it was a flat. And they only charged us one hundred and sixty five dollars. So we were very happy.

Q: And what was the difference between that apartment and where you were at 455?

Crump: Well, the one at 455 was a multiple, you know, dwelling. I guess hundreds, you know, apartments. It was a fourteen story building, and we lived on the thirteenth floor which actually terrified me then. But that's another story for another day. And we moved into this, you know, two family home.

Q: Where did you do your shopping in Newark?

Crump: We did our shopping at A&P. And the reason I say A&P is because that was a chain that was most known to us. At that time in the 60s, as you well know, the A&P chain was, you know, one of the premier food chains in the country. So I shopped at A&P.

Q: What about clothing and household goods? Where did you shop for those kinds of things?

Crump: One of the things I did enjoy that I miss to this day is that I was able to do most of my shopping in Newark. And my husband and I shared the same, I guess, socially conscious attitude about our community. We brought this with us from Detroit. And I was never a great mall person, you know, to run up to the mall. And then too on Bergen Street where we were, in the area where we are, we had wonderful shops. I didn't have to go far. And I loved that. I do miss that. You could take care of all of our needs.

Q: How were you treated as a customer in those places where you did shop? Were there any racial attitudes or incidents that you can remember?

Crump: None that I recall, anything overt. But what was the first store? Anyway, there was a First Store on Bergen Street, and I went in there one day. And I never will forget. They kind of looked at me like, oh yeah, right. And it wasn't until after they asked me a few personal questions about our income, and our income at that time, you know, considered well above the national average or anybody's average, and then they started being nice to me. And I lost interest in them real quick. Because they were only nice to me because they thought I had money.

Q: What was the ethnicity of merchants in the neighborhood?

Crump: They were primarily Jewish. A few Italian merchants, but it was a Jewish neighborhood.

Q: Did they employ blacks?

Crump: Some did. In the shoe store, some of the clothing stores. But they weren't always positions that, they were always, almost always entry level positions. You know what I mean Stock clerks, very few salespersons, persons who were decision makers.

Q: The neighborhood was basically mixed in terms of residents though, right?

Crump: You mean mixed residents?

Q: Yeah.

Crump: When we first moved there, no. It was still more Jewish than African-American or any other. In the Wickwake section, which is where we lived. And you should remember, this is before the riots.

Q: So there was not resentment toward merchants and store owners simply because they were not African-American?

Crump: No. No. There was not. That's something that came later.

Q: Were you able to get credit at any of the local stores?

Crump: Yes. We were. Can I? I don't mean to interrupt you.

Q: Sure. No. Go ahead.

Crump: What I saw that happened is initially when you would walk into one of the stores, and they would sort of look at you like what are you doing there. Then once they discovered that your income was at a level where you could afford to shop in their stores, the attitude changed. That always bothered me. Because I felt that if I were poor white, versus poor black, the treatment would have been different. Because they didn't treat me like they felt I was worthwhile until after they discovered that I had a couple of dollars.

Q: Okay. Let me go back to the rent question, Mildred. It was not because you could not afford the two twelve for the apartment at 455, it was just because it was against your --

Crump: Absolutely.

Q: -- your principles. [Laughter]

Crump: When my mother found that we were paying two hundred twelve dollars rent, she said, go buy yourself a house.

Q: Well, what was the rent like in Detroit?

Crump: Oh. You could get rent, you have a gorgeous, gorgeous house. I'm not sure how many rooms, but you could rent an apartment like this for, easily for one hundred and thirty-five dollars, a hundred fifty maximum. And I remember when my sister called me one day, and she rented the second floor of a house very much like yours, and she called saying, guess what? And I said, what's the matter? Couldn't imagine. She said, my rent just went up. I said, well, what is it? She said, it's a hundred and thirty-five dollars, and I'm going to move. Well, I fell out laughing. Because by then, by now, I'm an east coast person. And a hundred thirty-five dollars wouldn't get you into, you know, any apartment of any size.

Q: Now we were talking about the stores where you shopped, and you said that you were able to get credit there?

Crump: Yes.

Q: Did you?

Crump: The fact that my husband worked for AT&T, a fabulous community, it gave us credibility.

Q: The fact that you were able to get credit at those stores did that influence your decision to shop there?

Crump: Oh yes. Yes it did.

Q: Okay. How would you compare your experiences in Newark with your experiences in Detroit with respect to the following questions? Eating habits. When you came to Newark, were you able to purchase dry goods and foods that were familiar to you?

Crump: Oh yes.



Q: Where you came from.

Crump: The, as I said, we shopped at A&P. Very little transition in terms of food. Besides, both my husband and I liked to eat at, we lived to experiment with different kinds of food. So, you know, if there was something different, we would try it.

Q: Given the fact that most of the African-American people in Newark migrated from the south, did you find a difference in the kinds of food that were accustomed to in Detroit and --

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Q: Okay, you were saying that part of the south that you came from, you ate what kinds of food?

Crump: We ate mustard and turnip greens. My husband coming from the part of the south where he came from, they ate collard greens. And so until I moved to the east coast, I had never had collard greens. We had mustard and turnip greens. In the midwest, we ate mullet fish. We ate a heavy fish. When I moved here, we had wandy and butter fish and, you know, those kinds of fishes. We had cat fish. Both places had cat fish. But there were some differences in terms of, just in terms of the types of foods. We were both, because we had southern roots, we were both firmly planted in southern cooking. And so that was not a problem with us.

Q: What we could ssoulfood that we --

Crump: Absolutely.

Q: had in the south. Like as you said, collard greens, black eyed peas, sweet potatoes, corn bread.

Crump: Absolutely. Friday night we looked forward to my father's cooking. My dad was a

renaissance man. One the weekend, he took over the care of us children. He gave my mother a break. And my mother who could cook very well, but my dad could cook rings around her. Would start out Friday night. We always had greens, fish and grits. We knew that when we could eat hardy because everything was going to taste good. I brought my own children up the same way.

Q: In what ways did, was dress different from where you came from and when you go Newark? Was there a difference in the way that people dressed?

Crump: I think so. They're a lot more conservative in the midwest. A lot more traditional in their approach. I found when I moved here a lot more flamboyancy, individualism. You know, we were kind of closed in the midwest, you know, we wore gloves three button to the wrist. You know that kind of thing. The old folks used to bring you up. There was just a certain way you dressed on Sunday. And I found that not to be true here.

Q: Hats and gloves to church.

Crump: That's right.

Q: And you weren't dressed if you didn't wear hat and gloves. Were relatives and friends as helpful and supportive here in Newark as they had been in your home town?

Crump: Yes they were. My best friend moved from Connecticut into 455 Elizabeth Avenue. That's why I'll always be grateful to the Colonade for kicking us out. And she is still my friend to this day. Grew up, was born and reared in New York City, and she and I met in 1965 at 455 Elizabeth Avenue, and she was the one who taught me how to get around, how to function, how to operate, and not to feel bad when somebody didn't say excuse me, you know, or I said hello and they looked at me like what is wrong with her kind of thing. But Cynthia was, her name is Cynthia Washington and I'll always be grateful to her. She made my transition lots easier.

Q: When we lived in the south, we had a certain kind of respect for older people, and they did not have to be relatives for us to refer to them as aunt such and such or uncle such and such.

Crump: Absolutely.

Q: And was that a custom in your home?

Crump: Absolutely. You did not address an older person by their first name. You better not. It was a sign of the height of disrespect. And so, either if you didn't call them Mr. or Mrs., you addressed them by, you either called them by their first name, it might be Miss Chile Washington, you'd say Miss Chile. If you didn't say Mrs. Washington or aunt, you know, or uncle, whomever. But, and even cousins. When you had a cousin who was your senior by several years. My cousin Evelyn Johnson was my senior by several years, and I always called her cousin Evelyn.

Q: Was there a difference in the way you celebrated birthdays and holidays where you came from and what you found in Newark?

Crump: Well, we kind of brought our traditions with us. My family is a very loving, caring family. And it's not just the blood type, but it's an extended. And we, our friends tell us that we sort of set a new standard cause we celebrate accomplishments. That's what I was taught. Celebrate glad when somebody accomplishes something., But we would have a party if somebody had a promotion, you know. And at that time, of course, that was critical. If you got a promotion, you were somebody. So we kind of brought that tradition with us from our southern roots, but Detroit.

Q: What about when babies were born into the family or when somebody got married or when someone passed on and that kind of? Was there a difference in the way those kinds of things were observed in Newark as opposed to where you were before?

Crump: Yes I do think so. I think there was a lot more attention paid to it. And I'm trying to figure out why. Cause growing up in a African-American community which really was a village. The title absolutely positively suits the manner in which I grew up. We celebrated one another. When I moved here, because the community was diverse. It was not as, I use the word culturally pure as where I came from, there wasn't that much, as far as I could tell, there wasn't that much attention paid to minor accomplishments. Where I came from, we celebrated minor and major.

Q: What about holidays like Christmas, Easter, Fourth of July and Thanksgiving? Were they celebrated differently here then where you?

Crump: There was rather a traditional. And, you know, during the course of the interview we had to stop while I called Edie May Livingston, who used to be Councilman George Branch's executive secretary for many years and a dear friend, and she just made a comment to me on the phone. She said, well, tell your daughter that I didn't get an invitation to Thanksgiving dinner. And by that what she meant is that all of our friends, we brought here again is a tradition, where everybody could put their name in the pot and could come to our house for dinner. It was kind of like the, I don't know, we were the place where folks gathered during holiday periods. And it was very much like what we used to observe in the south with my grandparents.

Q: What about the use of intoxicants and other substances? How did the use of items like liquor, drugs, tobacco, pipes, cigars, cigarettes, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all of that? Did you know of people who used those things, both in your home and when you got to Newark?

Crump: Oh yes. My aunt is 97 years old, and I was visiting her earlier this year when I returned from the Democratic Convention and she asked me if I could get her some snuff. My Aunt Shug, as she is now, she is the matriarch of our family. God bless her. She still remembers phone numbers and things like that. Still dips snuff. That's what it was called. Yes within our family and certainly within our extended family we knew people who indulged and some who over-indulged in all of those items that you mentioned. But ours was a fortunate family in that we didn't have a



preponderance of. We had three people out of our entire family who fell prey to drugs. Two of them are completely rehabilitated. Unfortunately one passed away. But we were, we felt that we had more to do with our time, better things to do with our time than that.

Q: Did I ask you were you born in the south or were you born in Detroit?

Crump: Sometimes I feel as I was born in the south. I was actually born in Detroit. But I went south every summer of my life until I was seventeen years old. We would catch the train in Detroit with our shoebox with our friend chicken and our pound cake and our oranges and our jug of water because we knew once we hit Cincinnati, we'd have to go to the back of the train and would not be allowed to purchase food. And so my mother, you know, prepared us for that. And I cannot travel by car to this day without taking my own food.

Q: Who were you visiting in the south when you spent those summers there?

Crump: Oh my grandparents. And my aunts and uncles.

Q: Did you know anybody who ate such substances as clay dirt --

Crump: Oh sure.

Q: -- and starch?

Crump: Sure. My aunts, all of them. I used to eat starch. I wanted to see what it tasted like. We did all of those things. I wouldn't trade those experiences for anything.

Q: Nor would I. I can remember when we used to dig holes in the chimney to get the clay dirt. That tasted so good --

Crump: Oh. Wasn't that good?

Q: That smokey taste.

Crump: And when we think about it today, how did we do it. There was an expression they said that starch clogged your bowels and that if you ate enough, and I used to think, oh Lord, I'm sure my Aunt Laura, she ate a whole bunch of. About maybe a box of starch a day. Probably I'm exaggerating, but, it was a lot.

Q: What about medical practices? How did the use of such as home remedies, patent medicines and midwives in Newark compare with the use of such in your southern experience?

Crump: Oh gee. My Aunt Carbelle was declared dead by the doctor. He said, I can't do anything for her. She's got the croup. And my grandmother came in, my Grandma Jodie came in, and she said, give me a bottle of gin and some rock candy. See rock candies was a peppermint candy. And let it steep overnight. Never will forget this. And the next morning she started feeding that to my aunt, and in two days my aunt was up walking around. The doctor wanted to know how did that happen. And it was because of gin and rock candy. Oh yes.

Q: Did you know anyone who believed in what we used to call conjure, like voodoo and whodo and, you know, that kind of thing? And roots, did you?

Crump: Yes. Yes. We did know people back up in the woods, you know. When we talk about working roots on people, I was afraid, you know, of the people themselves. Because I saw them as a child, through my, through the eyes of the adults in my life. And voodoo and conjuring and all of those things were considered anti-Christian, but they came from the culture, you know, of our people from the Caribbean more than anything else. So I was always afraid. And in a way, I always believed a little bit in it.

Q: What about pets? How were pets regarded in Newark in comparison with Detroit and/or the south?

Crump: We didn't really have an awful lot of pets. Here in Newark we had a cat and a dog, you know, Sundance and Calico. Neither one of them knew which they were. Calico was the cat and Sundance was the dog. We had them at the same time. Which does prove that a cat and a dog can live harmoniously together. I guess in a way it should be for people. But we had a cat in, I had a cat in Detroit who judged people by whether Tony liked you or not. And if Tony didn't like you, you were a problem. But I had a love of animals that came out of the south. I can say that it generated from what I saw on the farm.

Q: How did the incidents of crime in Newark compare with that in Detroit or the south?

Crump: When I first moved to Newark, I would say it was about even-steven. And that would be true of the entire country. We had a respect for other people's property. We did not violate their space. Certainly not violate their person. And it's only been within recent years, unfortunately, that we have lost it, and especially in black folk. You would never think of mugging an older person or someone's mother. Using language that was foul and ugly in the presence of a woman, even if you did know who they were. So I'd say that the standard was very high, as it was when I left Detroit, and the equivalent to the south.

Q: What about juvenile crime in Detroit at the time that you lived there or when you left? And how did that compare with juvenile crime in Newark when you arrived here?

Crump: I probably could say that it was about that time that we began to realize that something was happening. And the reason I say this, we have started in my church, which is a very community minded church, programs, after school programs. And we have a very progressive pastor, the Reverend Dr. Jesse J. McNeil, who was a living legend in and of his right worldwide. And we started doing these things as like preventive medicine. When I moved to Newark initially,

I saw it as the Garden of Eden. And it wasn't until I became involved that I realized that the creep, c r e e p, the creeping disillusionment was beginning to set in.

Q: How would you, how were overall relations with whites in Newark compare to relations to whites in your former home?

Crump: Well, as I said, in my home town I grew up in a predominantly, in fact it was, I won't even, the word predominant would suggest, you know, a greater percentage. But I grew up in an African-American neighborhood that was literally self-contained. We didn't know it was a ghetto until, you know, it was defined for us by World War II. It was a mixed neighborhood. All kind of professions. You know, the doctor lived down the street. The teachers lived across the, around the corner. And all of those kinds of things. And so when I went to college, it was a predominantly white college. And while I knew white people, I didn't know white people nor they me. I worked in an office, the admissions office, to make extra money after my first year of college, I was given a partial scholarship. And my sister was also in school at the same time in Connecticut. So my parents were really like, you know, they were rubbing noses. You know, my dad had two jobs, all this kind of stuff. And one of the first questions that was asked of me by an Armenian student from what was called the northwest section of Detroit at the time, she said to me, I have a question to ask you. I said, what is it? She said, do you have a tail. Excuse me. My dad said all colored folks, cause we were called colored folks then, all colored folks have tails. Her name was Lucy. I said, Lucy, come with me into the bathroom and I will show you my tail. And so it was those kind of things. I knew very little about Jewish people. And so a Cyprian who was Jewish gave me the book "Exodus" to read. It was my first introduction what was happening, what had happened in Germany, you know, during World War II and the whole Nazi and German extermination. And I want you to know I shared with her books about slavery. So that she understood that they were not in this genocidal arena by themselves.

Q: What major customs and traditions from the south do you recall surviving in New York? And what about cookouts and barbecues, etc.?



Crump: Oh yes. All of those. To a great extent. It certainly, the hospitableness of neighbor for neighbor where you can, and even to this day, where I live, I can go a neighbor and borrow a cup of sugar. And that kind of thing. Even some, can I borrow your car.

Q: That would be very hard for me to do to loan somebody my car.

Crump: Yes.

Q: I don't like my family members to drive my car.

Crump: We're like that.

Q: How were you treated by African-Americans who lived in Newark for a long time?

Crump: Well, at first as an outsider. Newark was a very closed, proud community. And you had to prove that you were good enough to be a part of that. And I understood that. I respected it. You couldn't just walk in and say, you know, here I am, move over world. No. No. No. No. No. It wasn't like that. Because we had too many bright, talented people already in the city. You had to make yourself of acceptance.

Q: What kind of work did you, you weren't old enough to work in the south before you left there, and I think you told me.

Crump: Oh, I had my first job at the age of thirteen.

Q: Oh really.

Crump: I think I mentioned earlier in the interview that my dad lost his job. Was working for the auto industry, and they downsized. That wasn't the word then, but, you know, whatever

happened. They didn't need a certain number of employees, and so he was terminated. And that time my mother went back to work, and all of us were expected to find some kind of a job. And so at thirteen, my aunt worked for a very wealthy white woman who owned a local clothing store. And so at thirteen she hired me to be like a stock clerk and, you know, just to help clean up and sweep up and make sure things were neat. So yes I was. And when I went south, I earned money by picking cotton. My grandfather owned a small farm, and we were paid by the bale. You know our contribution.

Q: What money did you earn at the store where you worked and what kind of money did they pay you when you picked cotton?

Crump: I remember how much they paid me. Five cents a pound for the cotton. But when I worked at the store, I made like maybe twenty-five dollars every two weeks. It wasn't an awful lot. I mean, for today's time, but then I remember in the late 50s, late 50s that's when it was. No middle 50s. Early 50s. Twenty-five dollars was a lot of money.

Q: Right. What was your first job in Newark and how did you get it?

Crump: Oh my first job in Newark was working with, working for the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. And the reason I got it was I had done a pilot program with children who were totally blind who also had other disabilities. And it received some national recognition. And the director of the program who worked for the State was director of the education program heard that I was in the area and called me and asked if I would like to come in for an interview, and I did, and got the job.

Q: And precisely what did you do in that job and how long did you work at it?

Crump: Precisely what I did as a Braille teacher?

Q: Yes.

Crump: Actually it was more than just Braille teacher. I was actually an education consultant. And I'm still a teacher in my heart still. That part of me. What I did is I set and monitored programs for students who were officially impaired throughout the State of New Jersey. I used to have to go Sussex County. When I first started, Sussex County was part of my territory. You talk about being afraid in race relations. When I would drive through those towns early in the morning before the major highways, the white kids would throw eggs and rocks. They knew I was coming through there. You know, to go. And they pretty much knew my schedule, and they'd step out and, you know, go whoo, you know, in front of my car. It was quite terrifying sometimes. And I almost never wanted to stop because I never knew what to expect from any of those persons. So anyway back to the question. That's what I did I set up and monitored programs for students who were visually impaired all over the State of New Jersey. And as a part of that, Braille instruction was a major, what, a major part of my curriculum.

Q: How far did you have to travel from where you lived to where you worked?

Crump: Well, as I said, I used to go to Sussex County. I went as far northwest as Sussex County, and as far south as Toms River. See there weren't an awful lot of us as Braille teachers. There still aren't enough. I think there are only about nine of us for the State of New Jersey at that time. So we had huge territories to cover.

Q: What were the working conditions like as far as wages and hours?

Crump: Oh. I must tell you when I left Detroit, I left Detroit and went to work actually for Jersey City. I went to Jersey City because Dr. Kelly was then head of the special education department that promised me the position of directorship of the programs for the blind and visually impaired. Here again, this was one of those incidents, a promise that was made sight unseen. And, I mean, at that time I was the first African-American Braille teacher in the city of Detroit, and he was not

expecting a black person. I know that. But when I walked into his office to say, hi, here I am. He tried to fake out. So what he did is he said to me, if you will work for Jersey City in another capacity and while we find funding for this position. All of a sudden they lost their funding for the directorship. And he said, we will, we'll fix it up for you. Don't worry. And in the meantime, Justin Taylor found out that I was on the east coast, and subsequently called me in. But I was committed to Jersey City for three months. So I worked for them until the end of 1965. And to cut to the real issue of the question. The working conditions were great. That's what I want to talk about. I went from making three thousand something or other in Jersey City, to seven thousand dollars working for the State of New Jersey. And that was big money. [Laughter] And I had to leave my house at seven and I didn't get back until ten most of the time. The working conditions were wonderful. It was something that I loved. Taking a chance to improve my skills and my craft. And I was helping children at the same time. And I loved my tenure with the State of New Jersey.

Q: Did you get along well with the other people who worked there?

Crump: Well, once they got over the fact that there really was a black teacher who really new who had to write Braille. You know, first they were like, yeah, Braille, she works. And we had a contest once, and I was the fastest Braille teacher of them, fastest Braillicist of all of them. And that sort of, you know, gave me some credibility.

Q: Were there any other African-American?

Crump: Not at that time. There were some who were employees. They were secretaries. You know, other kinds of support staff. Drivers, social workers, stuff like that, but no other Braille teacher. Not that time.

Q: How do you refer to the language of the blind? I mean,



Crump: You say look and see.

Q: When you read or write, you read and write in Braille. But how do you define their physical language that they, you know, they use?

Crump: They read. I want you to turn to page 45 and read, find the second paragraph and read that paragraph to me. I want you, on the Braille writer, which is their paper and pencil, I need you to write for me an outline of the for your next report on African-American culture.

Q: You know what I think I'm confusing blind and Braille, with deaf and dumb.

Crump: Oh sign Deaf and mute.

Q: Sign language.

Crump: Deaf and mute.

Q: Yes. Yes Yes.

Crump: That's sign.

Q: I'm thinking. I was thinking of sign language when I'm asking how do you express the language of the blind.

Crump: Oh, I didn't know what to think. I know you're a very dramatic person. So I thought you were just adding some drama to the question. Okay. [cross talk] When we talk about the deaf, first of all they can see. So when we talk, if I said to you, you were deaf. I would say to you explain to me what you meant by that question. You know, I wouldn't say show me. I would use the same language, explain to me. And they would then explain to me via you know signing.

Q: Okay. Both of those must be very interesting areas of work.

Crump: I loved it.

Q: Deaf and dumb as well as the blind.

Crump: Deaf and mute.

Q: Thank you.

Crump: Okay. You know why I say that because they're not dumb.

Q: No they're not. But when we use dumb, it's not a matter of intellectual dumbness, it's a matter of being unable to speak.

Crump: I know.

Q: And we never got out of that habit.

Crump: And what happened is because I'm around persons with those particular disabilities so much, especially where they're smart, it just crunches me so.

Q: And now what was the racial makeup of the groups that you worked with?

Crump: When I first moved to New Jersey, I'd say the racial makeup was eighty percent white to twenty percent black. I requested to be moved closer to Newark. Because I felt our children were not getting the service that they so justly deserved. When I was in college, I almost didn't graduate because the director of the department did not want a black, let alone a black, black in teaching in her department. She did everything she could to discourage me. And for one class that I had, she

asked us to write a paper, and I wrote my paper on what are the Negro blind. What I did an analysis and back then, you're talking about mid-50s, that was a very radical approach. I did an analysis of the services between the white students in Detroit and us. And there was just a huge difference. And so she said to me one day. She threw the paper at me and she said, I can't accept this. And I said, I had just about had it with her. I mean, I'd had it for four years. She'd done everything she could to me. But I was determined not to quit. And she said, you have to re-write this paper, and without any disrespect, I said, Dr. Coke, I'm not redoing my paper. And she said, well, if you don't re-write it, you'll fail. And I said, then I guess I'll fail. She told me it was inappropriate, how dare I. So I had a wonderful, wonderful counselor. And in that class I had received all As on every single exam. And so I went to my advisor, and what happened is --

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

Q: You explained to me how you were treated by your supervisor, Mildred, what about the students that you worked with? How did they relate to a black teacher?

Crump: The problem wasn't so much with the students. The problem was with the parents. And also the teachers in the buildings where I was going, where the students were enrolled. I received, there were great levels of hostility. I remember one case, let's see, I almost called the young man's name. I'll just call, his first name was James. And James loved Mrs. Crump. And the parents kept telling me, he'd tell me every time I saw him. But don't you know she's the uh, uh, uh, you know, the n word, you know, that kind of thing. And James subsequently died. I never will forget. His parents called me to say thank you for all that they felt I had done to help their son, you know, during his lifetime. He had a brain tumor. But, oh I remember, Rose's parents. I had so many parents who were like, they actually would call and say we want another teacher, you know, for our child. And get someone else. Fortunately, with the State of New Jersey with Josephine Taylor who was a remarkable woman, she said you either take Mildred or you don't take anyone. After they found out, I guess, I could do what I was saying that I could do, they began to accept me, but it was very, very difficult.

Q: Was there a union that affected the job or did you join a union?

Crump: Yes I did. I joined the union, but the union really had no, because it was professional positions, really had no bargaining rights if I could say that between the teachers and the school or teachers and the parents. It had the bargaining rights between the teachers and the State of New Jersey. So it was a matter of working out the kinks.

Q: Did you ever do any casual or part-time work? If so, what kind and for how long?

Crump: I'm not sure what you mean by casual?

Q: Any kind of part time work or any work that was aside from your regular duties? You were a Braille teacher, but did you have any other jobs that didn't have anything to do with teaching the blind? Any part time jobs?

Crump: Yeah. A couple of summers I ran the programs for the blind and the deaf. During the summer, I ran them in Cranford. That was a good experience. Most of the side jobs, if you can call it that, were almost always directly tied into what I did on a full time basis. So I rarely, I mean, I had a catering business, but that was something separate and apart. And that was not casual, believe me Glen. That was work.

Q: Were you ever unemployed, Mildred?

Crump: Unemployed at my husband's insistence. He wanted me to be a wife and a mother, and to do traditional things, and, you know, with two children. But I've never been employed at someone else's insistence or request.

Q: How long were you unemployed?



Crump: I stayed home to help rear my children. I stayed home to rear my children until they were in, maybe the sixth or seventh grade.

Q: A total of how many years were you a mother or a homemaker?

Crump: I was that for, if we overlap, say maybe ten years. And what I used to do is when I got real bored with that, I would sneak off and sub at Maple Avenue Annex across the street. My husband never knew it. That shows how wholesome I had to be.

Q: What were the common occupations for black men or women in Newark when you first came here?

Crump: The government was and still is, and I'm not just talking about the city government, but all levels, county as well as federal, was the primary employer for us. Simply because they had to be the role model for the rest of the country and the local community.

Q: Were there black people moving into other kinds of jobs that were not traditional for black folk during your early years or even since you've been here? What kind of challenges have you seen?

Crump: Yes. That was true. Because of course the influence of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was still being felt at the time, you know, that I moved here in 1965, as it was throughout the country. And there was a raising of the level of social consciousness within corporate America, and I'm sure that attributed a lot to, that attributed a great deal to my husband's rapid rise, you know, within corporate America through AT&T. Plus the fact that he could do the job.

Q: Do you have any awards or certificates or any kind of merit, I don't want to say badges, but anything that indicated an outstanding or a meritorious kind of performance in your job?

Crump: Yes. I was really blessed. It was funny I was thinking about my life as I was coming

over. I had no idea you were going to ask me these kind of questions. But for whatever reason, I have a God given talent for working with children that I can take no credit for. And because of that, I was sent all over the country to train teachers, you know, in Braille techniques. And been all over the country to speak about this whole profession. It's been, it was a rewarding experience. I could have been director of the department, but I just didn't want to. It was too tiresome of a system and I would have been another person.

Q: Now, any documentation or any certificates of award or that kind of thing, if you have them, would you be willing, if it came to a point in the future, where we wanted to accumulate those kinds of things. For instance, when we go to display our tapes in whatever form. I don't know what we're going to do with them at this point or how they will be made accessible to the public, but would you be willing to give us, perhaps copies, even if they're things that you want to keep. We might be able to make copies so they would displayed along with your.

Crump: Certainly. Absolutely.

Q: What church do you belong to, Mildred?

Crump: I am a proud member of the Bethany Baptist Church located right here in the City of Newark. And my pastor's the Reverend Dr. James [?]. 275 West Market Street.

Q: How active has your religious life been?

Crump: Well, I'd like to think that it's been fairly active. I grew up in the National Baptist Convention. And many of the prominent ministers throughout this country, we were kids together. I grew up specifically, of course, in the [voice too low to hear]. Dr. Marial Rock. They taught me everything I know. She and Dr. Rosenkemp. So, I don't ever remember really being out of the church except for a short period of time when I flirted with the Muslim faith. I'm on the cradle roll. I have never been bored in the church. Happy to say.

Q: Do you remember when you first became active in the church and what did you do then?

Crump: The truth is, Glen, I don't ever remember not being active. I was a junior missionary. The only thing I wasn't was a junior usher. I don't know why that never appealed to me. But mission work has always been part of my life. What the missionaries did in our home church in Detroit, was the mission meant if you were sick, they'd come and clean your houses. I used to trot after my mother and my aunt off to do that. But then I became a Sunday School teacher. Always sang in the choir. Was chair of a variety of programs, you know. So it was kind of expected. Because my mother was Mary Lee Johnson Coleman.

Q: What role do you play in the church now?

Crump: My favorite is right now is Share. Most people who know me know that feeding the hungry is my personal ministry. Always has been. And I'm coordinator for the Share Program. Which is a one of the reasons I'm running a little bit behind schedule today because it kept me from being on time. I had to run and make some deposits. I feel obligated to do this. My mother used to say when we were growing up, and my father too, that people are starving in this world. I didn't understand at the time how real that was. And once the reality hit me and I went to some foreign countries and saw people, I just promised God that this would be my personal ministry. Yeah, I, you know, I do whatever other little things around the church that need to be done.

Q: Tell me precisely what the Share Program is. And speak a little louder please.

Crump: Oh surely. The Share Program stands for Self Help and Resource Exchange. It is a food program that is not income based, but should be something that everybody was conscious of their purchasing dollar or the purchasing power of their dollar should be involved in. For a small amount of money, for fifteen dollars, you're able to get thirty to thirty-five pounds of food. And it is of quality and the baskets are, and it just feeds, it can feed a family of one for a month. All you need to do is buy things like milk and, you know. Purchase as well as meat, as well as staples, and

fruits and just wonderful. And unfortunately it's the best kept secret in town. But Bethany has, we have one of the stronger programs.

Q: What do you know about the history of Bethany?

Crump: I know a great deal because, as you know, for many years my husband was chairman of the trustee board. And, in fact, when the new Bethany was built, Cecil was chairman of the board at that time. And through his involvement I'm quite familiar with the history of Bethany. I joined under Reverend Scott.

Q: Okay. I was just going to ask you who, or do you know of any other ministers, especially the outstanding ones who were pastors of Bethany before Dr. Scott came. Okay. What do you consider to be Bethany's major accomplishments?

Crump: That's a tough question. I think probably because we've done so much. But if I were to try and put it into words, it is the fact that we are known throughout the state as a community church. And I can honestly say that wherever I go, people constantly compliment our church on its community outreach. And we were doing this long before it was something that churches felt they should do. Our youth programming. Our Hope Program is a model for persons who find their lives and their mental state at a level of dysfunctioning. Our Cape, Christian Advocate for Public Education is a role model throughout the state of New Jersey. I already mentioned our feeding program. We've received so many commendations, awards for that, our outreach ministry, and housing projects. We were the first, you know, to make that effort on such a wide scale. Farmer's market. I could just go on and on and on. But we are a breadth congregation.

Q: How much have you participated in social and cultural activities in Newark?

Crump: Well, I'd like to say that I've been a part of the social and cultural revolution. Before I became a personality, if I can use that expression, I was never quiet. That was not one of my



ccharacteristics I was not a drum banger. But even early on I wrote letters. And that's how I. I would write letters and cc to them, for example, to Glen Marie Brickus, who is in charge of a project. And that's how I became noticed, I guess, I can use that. Because I've always believed in putting my thoughts in writing. And that's how I was appointed to so many boards because I wrote letters to the governor, to the president, to whomever about it.

Q: Did you ever belong to like the Eastern Star, or any literary societies, choral ensembles, benevolent associations?

Crump: No. I never did. When I wanted to join the Eastern Star, they said my husband had to be a Mason. If he wasn't one, then I was not eligible for membership in that particular organization. I am a member of a sorority. A public service sorority, although it has a social image, our mission is public service, and that is Alpha Gamma Beta sorority.

Q: Can you remember any literary societies that ever existed among our people in Newark? African-Americans.

Crump: Oh yes, yes. Years ago, when I had the time, I attended the Phyllis Wheatley Literary Society. They used to meet at the library. I'm hoping they still do. I'm a great reader. And Phyllis Wheatley, I brought my mother, Phyllis Wheatley was from Detroit, where these group of women that I mentioned, we founded a Phyllis Wheatley Home for Girls. So that was an easy transition. Public service is a literary commitment.

Q: What about chorale ensembles? Do you sing?

Crump: Well, I try as you well know. [Laughter] As you well know. My mother and father sang a little bit. And when I say this, I say this really tongue in cheek. My sister actually sang with a gospel group. She's much better than I. And so I just sing in the choir now.

Q: What about benevolent associations?

Crump: Over the years I've sort of wandered in and out of a variety of organizations that have a benevolent, a mission of benevolence. Some church related, some are not. They're just organizations that do good work. I enjoy them because I think that we're obligated to give back to the community in some form or fashion.

Q: How much have you participated in political activities in Newark?

Crump: Well, I guess some people would say a lot. I came from a political background in Detroit. My dad was a union politician. But even before that, my grandfather, both grandfathers. But my paternal grandfather in particular was very, very politically involved. And so my mother used to tell us later on, you can't help yourself. It's in your blood. When I first moved to Newark in 1965, I didn't know beans about Newark. Probably could tell you a lot about Detroit politics, but beans about Newark politics. And if you recall, in 66 that was the election year that Ken Gibson was running. A young lady who lives in my apartment building came to me and asked me if I would help her host. She explained the political ramifications of this to me. If I would help her host a party for Calvin West. Well, I fried my first chicken wings for Calvin West, believe it or not, in 1966. I guess you could say and the rest is history. When I became [voice fades out] which was the furthest thing from my mind.

Q: What political organizations or parties do you belong to now?

Crump: Oh I am a member of the Democratic Party. I do practice independence in terms of my responsibility as a, my vote, but I am and about a member of the Democratic Party. I come out of a Republican family that was a Republican tradition because as you recall, Lincoln, the Republican Party was the party of Lincoln. So most black folks in the south, those who transitioned from the south, you know, to the north, that was where we were. I subsequently switched parties. I remember my father practically rolled over and died. You know, because I switched. How dare

you go with those rabble rousers as they were called. That's where my head is. I believe they're the party of the people.

Q: What positions have you held or what parts have you played in your political affiliations?

Crump: Actually, I've never been a county committee person, or what's known as a district leader. The district leader in my own district did a very good job, and I'm a great believer that you don't run against people who are doing what needs to be done just for the sake of running. I did ask one year if she would be willing, and she said, oh I love what I'm doing. So, no problem. I didn't need, need that to be a viable force for myself in the community and create dissention. I've never held a position. I've always just been a worker, from a grunt worker to, I guess, at this point today, of policy decision maker.

Q: Who would you consider to have been or is now the outstanding leaders in the political organizations that you belong to?

Crump: I neglected to mention that I, especially a few years back, was very active with the National Congress for Black Women, which was founded by Shirley Chisolm. She was and continues to be my role model. I heard from her not too long ago. I will be writing to her again, seeing whether or not she will be able to come in for the Women's Conference in 1997. I stay pretty much in touch, you know, with her. I continue to marvel at what she's accomplished as an African-American woman. Now this is a woman who is political, but she's accomplished a lot.

Q: How much have you participated in community activities?

Crump: Well, I think, I'd say a great deal. I'm a member of the Wickwake Partnership for example which is dedicated to the maintenance and upgrading of Wickwake Park. I was laughing the other day because when they first, the first day that they sent the bulldozers out to tear down the stadium, I laid down in front of the bulldozers so they couldn't come. And Wilbur McNeil

said, Mildred, please get up off the ground. So they didn't run over me. That's how passionate I was about what was done to Wickwake Park. And I know that had it remained in a Jewish community, they never would have. The county would not have done that. But organizations such as that have always had my interest, and always will.

Q: Aside from being a consumer of regular goods and services, in what ways did you or do you participate in the economic life of the community?

Crump: Ninety percent of Mildred Crump's salary is spent in Newark, on Newark vendors. And that's from clothing to, you know, food and to other services. Beauty shops. The only thing that I probably spend money on, in fact, I know that I do. I spend money on, outside of Newark, for shoes. And that's because I'm on my feet a great deal and I have discovered a store where their shoes fit me. They order them for me. And I go buy them. I don't even have to try them on. But my money is invested in my community. I believe in that, you know, practice.

Q: Did you ever own or operate your own business?

Crump: I sure did. For a number of years when I told you I was unemployed at my husband's request, three other women and myself, Shirley Way and Beatrice Allison, in 1975 decided we'd form our own business. And it was a catering business. And for about ten years we were quite busy. We had word of mouth in the [voice too low] because I loved to cook.

Q: How large did the business grow? We have any way of measuring the success of a business?

Crump: Well, I don't know the measure. But I have a story. We were, Shirley and Beatrice came out of corporate America and so were accustomed to doing things the right way. And in our efforts, we incorporated. We became a legal entity. And we needed three hundred dollars a piece to incorporate. And I said to my husband, gee, honey, I need three hundred dollars for incorporation for my catering business. He said, excuse me. I said, yeah. So anyway, he gave me



such a hard time about this three hundred dollars. He said, you all, aren't. You know, I will say he had little faith in our ability as business women. That first Christmas, this was in August, and that first Christmas after expenses were paid, in the middle of the month, not the end of the month, but in the middle of the month, I went to him and I peeled off nine one hundred dollar bills in front of his faith. He never laughed at our business again. So we were, we were pretty good.

Q: Where was the business located?

Crump: We actually did have a location. Our location was in our own homes. And back then the regulations weren't as stringent, you know, as they are now. And I think rightfully so. But we were able to do that. We were looking for a place. We just never found one that met our needs.

Q: Is the business still functioning?

Crump: No it isn't. Unfortunately, I mentioned that Beatrice passed. And I became so involved in politics that it takes more of my time.

Q: But Shirley's still there.

Crump: Shirley's still doing catering. I still refer people to her. In fact, she called me this morning to say hi.

Q: How did you get information on the news and events of the community? Did you read a black newspaper? If so, which one? Did you listen to a black oriented station? If so, which one?

Crump: Okay. I've always listened to WOIO, WBLS, WWRL, and last, but not least, WNJR. Before it changed hands it was the community pipeline into what was going on nationally, internationally. I guess it still is, but for, not so much for African-Americans who are from the continent, but for African-Americans from a variety, or people of color from a variety of

communities. Yes, I've always kept in touch through, with our community, through African-American newspapers. I used to have the Michigan Chronicle, which was our African-American paper in Detroit, sent to me for many, many years. And I don't know why I discontinued that subscription. I have to check that out. But then the Amsterdam News. Of course, when Harry Webber was alive, we always knew what was going on in the neighborhood.

Q: Do you have any idea what the relationship between black Newark and other black communities in New Jersey has been or is now?

Crump: I would like to believe that my assessments of our being the pivotal point is accurate. Certainly the leaders of those communities get together to discuss issues that are common to us as a people. We don't always find solutions, but we do discuss, we discuss possible solutions.

Q: Did you ever or do you visit other black communities in the state of New Jersey?

Crump: Oh absolutely. Other than Newark you mean. Just yesterday I was in Orange. Sunday I was in Orange. But I met with, not just met with, sat with the mayor, we had dinner, talked about common issues with another businessman from Newark.

Q: What outstanding blacks did you meet or hear of in Newark?

Crump: Oh my goodness. Oh, they're so many. Certainly Connie Woodruff comes to my mind instantly. Having been in Newark, even though she lived in West Orange. Emiri Bharacha. Wayne Shorter, the musician. Oh golly, I don't know where to go on that one. The number of famous, like clergy persons, you know, who have come out of Newark. Our own pastor, Reverend Scott. Reverend Whatley, Reverend Dr. Whatley., Oh dear, just any number.

Q: What about --

Crump: Glen Marie Brickus.

Q: You flatter me so. I mean, what, like entertainers who may have come to Newark. Like big band leaders.

Crump: Wayne Shorter, I already mentioned. Eartha Kitt. George Benson. Kirk Franklin. Tennessee Wright. Rose Scott.

Q: Dr. King, our Dr. King came here at one time.

Crump: Oh Dr. King. Yes.

Q: Jessie Jackson came here one time.

Crump: He's been here many times.

Q: Albert Poussant was at our church last year.

Crump: Absolutely. You're helping me with the list. It's the kind of question that. You ever have anybody ever ask you a question, and the answer is as obvious as the nose on your face, and you just can't think of all the people. But Newark has had the benefits of great people. Shirley Chisolm I already mentioned has been here several times.

Q: What do you remember about such public servants as the police, firefighters, social workers, etc? In terms of race relations really is the premise of the question. When you first came to Newark where there any black policemen?

END SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO.

Q: I had asked you about race relations or black participation in such organizations as the Newark police, and firefighters and social workers. And I would also add schoolteachers. Were there many blacks?

Crump: The fire and the police and fire departments were pretty much closed shops to African-Americans and black folks up until recent times. In 1980, the dissent decree was declared by the courts. And after that you began to see more of us in it. Teaching and nursing were and are pretty traditional professions for us. They were acceptable, you know, professions. So we've been a part of them, and when I came to Newark, they were, we were part of that professional category. But the others, we're beginning to see changes I'm happy to be able to report.

Q: When you or others in your neighborhood got into trouble or needed help to solve a problem, to whom did you turn?

Crump: Ninety percent of the time it was to the ministers in the area. There were some community leaders such as Queenie James, Honey Ward, Larry Stark. But for the most part it was to the church that we were able to turn for assistance. Some political leaders.

Q: Why did you go to these people?

Crump: Because they were the ones who were able to produce the results. To make, and to find and to create the action of adjudication of whatever the circumstances were.

Q: Were they always effective?

Crump: No, not always. But you could pretty much know that your pastor would be willing to go to the judge and say something on your behalf, in your behalf, that might persuade the judge to give you another chance. But I think that was pretty much true of us traditionally. It was to the church that we went to for support in times of trouble and difficulties.



Q: Where do you remember black people living in Newark at the time that you came? Were there certain neighborhoods where?

Crump: Oh yeah. The Third Ward or the Central Ward as it's now called. They have a great reunion. A dance one a year, and you get to see everybody. I think the second pocket for us was the South Ward, the ward in which I still live. And we gradually began to infiltrate into the West Ward and parts of the East Ward. The old Third Ward.

Q: How was black Newark perceived? Was the community seen as a slum?

Crump: After 1967, yes. Pre-1967, no. I have, I told you earlier that I worked outside of Newark for a very long period of time. And so what I did is I literally drove from where I lived either on, I'm sorry, on Elizabeth Avenue. You know, at the time to go into [?]. This community, I was always getting lost. Always getting lost. Oh my God. I was so lost. First of all, not being from here, you know, and going to work for in a position that was itinerant, which meant you moved from place to place. One night I was coming home from work, and I had just driven around. I just couldn't find my way. And I stopped a police officer, and I said, officer, how do I get to Newark from here? And he looked at me, he said, Miss, you are in Newark. Guess where I was. I was on Wilbur Avenue. And I went home that night and I said to my husband, when we buy a house, I want to buy one on Wilbur Avenue because I did not know I was in Newark. We didn't buy on Wilbur Avenue. As you know, the mayor lives there. But what we did, we bought a house around the corner from him. That's how beautiful and gracious the area was at the time. I would love to say that it's remained the same. Unfortunately, it's not. Who knows? I can honestly say our block has remained the same. We've only had one house, maybe two houses, where there's been a turnover from the original neighbors, after the white folks, you know, fled. Fled the community.

Q: Did all classes of African-Americans live in close proximity to you?

Crump: Yes. Yes. Even, I'm in favor of mixed housing. I'm not just in favor of low income housing or low income residents being segregated. Because how are they going to know about things to which they can aspire if they don't see these real life role models.

Q: How did the people who did live in the neighborhoods get along? The middle class blacks along with the lower class blacks. Or if there were whites who lived in the community at the time, how did all of these persons get along together?

Crump: One upon a time, there was this attitude of family and perception of family, especially between professional blacks and non-professional blacks. Unfortunately, over a period of time, we began to adopt the same attitude the white folks had about us. That some of us were better than others. And it's unfortunate that we forgot that we are, wherever we are, we are our brother's and sister's keeper. As fast as you go up the ladder, that's how fast you can come back down. So you better be nice to those people that you don't think are as good as you are and treat them with a lot of respect.

Q: Other than white store owners and other whites with a vested economic interest, do you recall any other whites having an interest in the black community?

Crump: There are a few. And I don't know if you've had an opportunity to visit of Richard Camararie, who have a high level of social consciousness. But you're absolutely right that the preponderance of African-American, I mean of white caucasians in America who are involved in our community are there for monetary. John Mangroves. These are people with great social conscience.

Q: Did you shop in downtown Newark?

Crump: Oh yes. Absolutely. And still do. I was thinking just today that I have to go down to Rockaway Bedding. I don't go up to the malls. I really meant it when I said that. To do my

shopping. I need another bed, and I'm going right down there to Rockaway Bedding on Broad Street and buy another bed. I gave away a bedroom set. It was actually one of the kid's rooms. To a young woman who couldn't afford to buy bedroom furniture for her children. So I gave it away. Now I'm, I need the bed back. I'm having company for Christmas. I have to go buy a new bed.

Q: What were the major stores in Newark and how has downtown Newark changed over the years?

Crump: Oh it's changed, as you well know, dramatically. The major stores were Hanes, Lord & Taylor, and Macy's, Bamberger's before it was Macy's, S. Klein, Chestlocks. Just, there were just so many wonderful stores that were in competition with one another. And it was healthy for the competition for the dollar. But there, they've gone the way of, unfortunately, the dinosaurs.

Q: Which among those you named do you consider to have been Newark's best store?

Crump: Hanes. I loved Hanes. S. Klein, Chestlocks. I don't know. I went to all of them for different reasons, you know. And for different items. I mean, if I were to say another one that was important, Stride Rite. We had a Stride Rite store. And that's where I bought all of my children's shoes. I was able to do that. I had a husband that kind, that allowed me to buy absolutely the best for our children. So I don't know which one was the best. They were all best for what I was, what I needed.

Q: What incidents involving racial discrimination in Newark have you experienced?

Crump: I'm going to share with you my experience with the Colonnade Apartment. There were, there've certainly been others. Unfortunately, two new words I want to pick out those that were most obvious and most glaring. The name Crump, of course, calls to mind someone who doesn't look like me. And I remember, and I think it's, in fact I know it's one of the reasons I became very

active in the Newark Y. When I moved to Newark, I knew two things that I could bring with me. One was my sorority and the other was the YMCA because I was active in Detroit. And so I called, and I won't tell you the name of the director, but I called him, called the then director and said I'd like to volunteer to work. And he said, oh wonderful! And when I walked in and he saw who I was, I was advised I wasn't a viable volunteer. I said, okay, I'll just have to make my presence known. And so I went to work. And I don't know if you remember, but I became the first female, the first African-American female chair of the committee of management for the Newark Y back in the late 60s. No, mid-60s. Sorry. Because my children weren't even born at the time. And so the glaring racial incidents of then, that was one of them. And I thank him for forcing me to become active in the Y.

Q: What do you know or remember about the quote, Mayor of Springfield Avenue, unquote.

Crump: Oh, we're talking about. Oh isn't that ridiculous that I cannot recall his name. Yes. I do know the quote. Help me.

Q: I don't know who it was.

Crump: Oh it is. Oh, I'll find out for you. It'll come to my mind actually. Yes. Mr. Simmons who owned the restaurant on the corner of Springfield and South Tenth Street. Actually where Eighteenth Avenue begins. I'll have to. When I talk with him, I'll try and get that information. But there was a Mayor of Springfield Avenue. I hate to tell you Glen, it must be because I'm starving. That's corny. Sorry.

Q: I was hoping you would remember because nobody remembers who the Mayor of Springfield Avenue was.

Crump: Yes. I will ask Mr. Simmons.

Q: Precisely how did he effect the social climate, the economic climate, or whatever?

Crump: Well, you know, that part of Springfield Avenue at the time was ours. And, have you talked to Honey Ward? Have you interviewed Honey Ward?

Q: Not yet.

Crump: He may be someone that this committee may want to consider. But that was our territory, and it was almost like our town. When I make a comparison between Detroit and Newark, Dr. Albert Craig was like the mayor of the west side of Detroit. When you needed something, you went to see Dr. Craig. And so I think every black community at that time had its own titular head. I mean he wasn't titular to us; he was titular to white folks.

Q: Do you remember the Mayor of Springfield Avenue having been African-American or white?

Crump: Oh it was an African-American, it was one of us. And I do know the name.

Q: Do you remember why he was called the Mayor of Springfield Avenue?

Crump: Yes. Because of his influence. The name is actually on the tip of my tongue. That's too bad. As we get older, our memory begins.

Q: Yes. It will probably come to you while we're talking about something else.

Crump: It will come to me at four o'clock in the morning. I'll sit straight up in the bed, and I'm going to call you when it happens at four o'clock in the morning.

Q: Okay, what do you remember regarding such local personalities as William Ashby, Meyer Ellingstein, Prosper Brewer, I don't know what that was.



Crump: Prosper Brewer.

Q: Irving Turner.

Crump: Just ran into his granddaughter the other day. I'm hoping she'll, she does have a political mind, and who knows she might become one of Newark's councilman.

Q: Do you remember anything specific about any of those that I just named? Harold Ashby?

Crump: Oh yes.

Q: I'm sorry. Not Harold Ashby, William Ashby.

Crump: Dr. Ashby.

Q: William Ashby.

Crump: Yes. I do. And I'm gonna share with you something that I've always loved about Dr. Ashby. And it has to do with what goes on in our own culture. And that is class, it was a class thing. It's a color thing. Dr. Ashby, as a light, bright, you know, damn near white.

Q: Are we talking about William Ashby now, or Harold Ashby? I remember Harold Ashby.

Crump: Okay.

Q: But I don't remember William Ashby.

Crump: Oh, no, we're talking about Dr. Ashby, William Ashby.

Q: Harold Ashby was affiliated with the Newark Board of Education.

Crump: No, we're talking about Dr. Ashby, we're talking about William Ashby. The author of the book that's coming out fairly soon, that will be the second part of the book. The reason, and I'm intimately involved with the book, believe it or not, is because I sit on the Landmarks and Preservation Committee and we provided a mini-grant for the book. But he was, how shall I say it? He was a regular gentleman, a real gentleman. The last time I was in his presence during his, during the ceremonial part of his lifetime, was when we dedicated that triangle of land, West Market, that's West Market and --

Q: Twelfth Avenue.

Crump: -- yeah, and Twelfth Avenue. When we dedicated that.

Q: Yes. Where Claremont Hospital used to be there. Yeah.

Crump: I've been privileged to be a part of the some of the incidents of his life. He was a remarkable man. And he never, he walked with kings, but always maintained his common touch. I always loved that about him.

Q: What about Meyer Ellingstein?

Crump: He was the first, I believe the first Jewish mayor of Newark. And Sophie Cooper who was a councilwoman from the South Ward. There was a woman who lived in my neighborhood named Mrs. Mandel. And she was part of the reason that I became as active in the South Ward as I am. And she said to me one day, Mildred, you must meet the Sharpe James. We had the Wickwake Community Council at the time. And I said to her, I'd love to meet Sharpe James. And it's, Sharpe may not remember this, but it's because of Mrs. Mandel that I found out who he was. She was so impressed with him. But that also, we were part of the recall effort for the South

Ward's councilman who was, who got himself unfortunately into some difficulty with the community, and they didn't play, you know. If you disappointed them, you didn't stay in office forever. They came and got you.

Q: What about Prospero Brewer, who was that?

Crump: As well as I know his name.

Q: Early black trade unionist.

Crump: He was, but it was, not only was his name was Prospero because in my, one of the things my grandfather always taught us was to know who your people are. And he was along with, well I can't recall fine details. He preceded A. Philip Randolph in the trade union movement. I used to belong to an organization called Minority Women In Trade Unions. I forget about so many parts of my life. Minority Women In Trade Unions, even though I wasn't a trade unionist, I was a union person because of my dad. I had a union mind. So that was a long response.

Q: What about Irving Turner?

Crump: Oh, if anybody didn't remember Mr. Turner and his contributions to our community, we should never forget those who brought us over. I am where I am because he had the nerve to step out first.

Q: What do you remember regarding black institutions like hospitals, hotels, or banks in Newark and where were they located?

Crump: The institutions, the banking institution, of course, happened well into my life here in the City of Newark. And, of course, that was City National Bank. I can honestly say we were part of its founding. We bought some shares and I still receive some dividends. I'm never gonna sell

those shares in the bank. The institutions, for example, the old Kenney Hospital. The old Kenney Hospital that used to be on, it's where New Salem Baptist Church is now, 130 West Kenney Street. But it was Dr. Kenney, and the street is Kinney. There was two different. It just happened that coincidentally they're pronounced the same. I was on a tour of that recently because we're trying to establish that as an historic site in Newark. The Coleman Hotel. When, this is before my time too, but I'm aware of it. And I'm glad you reminded me. When we couldn't stay places. You know, of course, we could stay there. The old Father Divine, you know, hotel.

Q: The Riviera.

Crump: The Riviera, that one comes to everyone's mind. But we did have our own institutions that were provided services to our community. I don't know if there was a bank that preceded City National. I know Independence Bank was in New York City. It had a long, long history, you know, for African-Americans.

Q: There was a black bank that was located right at the intersection of Springfield Avenue and Court Street in that building where Leroy Jonah had established a school there.

Crump: Oh, 502.

Q: Yeah there was a. And I don't think it lasted very long. I think that preceded City National.

Crump: City National. Could be, but we could certainly. That would be something to check on.

Q: Do you remember any individuals who were associated with any of the institutions that we just talked about, the hospitals, the hotel or the banks? We know about the City National Bank.

Crump: Oh yeah, right., Dr. Kenney, who was the founder of the hospital, you know, as I mentioned up near 30 West Kinney Street. I think it's a relative still in there. You know, I

mentioned earlier that I do Share. I received a phone call during the course of the week. At holiday time, a lot of people extend themselves to the Share Program. I received a phone call from one of the pioneer physicians in our city, Dr. Earl Patterson, whose daughter Maude called and said, Mildred, I want to buy some shares in my dad's name for you all to give to needy families. So those of us who knew Dr. Patterson, he died at the age of what, ninety something or other. But was one of the early, early physicians, pioneer physicians in our community. And he loved my husband dearly, and we loved him just as dearly. Certainly Dr. Carol, May Carol. She was my neighbor. For a number of years she lived across the street. And we had an excellent relationship. So while we didn't have buildings of institutions, we had people who were institutions in our lives.

Q: What about the founders of City National Bank? Do you remember who was associated with the?

Crump: Yes. Reginald Hale. And Gus Hale, Maney Hale, his wife. Herb Johnson, Herbert Johnson. Oh, gee.

Q: Charlie Wiggam.

Crump: Oh Charlie Wiggam. I mean, I kind of assumed everybody knew that. Who knows but history, because this is for history, you need to call his name. Charlie Wiggam and his wife, Marie Wiggam. His children Lamar and his daughter who now runs it.

Q: I don't remember what her name was.

Crump: Oh I do. I see her all the time. It will come to me too. And his daughter who is now manager for the family. They were also part of the founding institution.

Q: What do you remember about the kinds of music that one heard in black Newark?



Crump: Oh, Sparkey J. We went, as I say, been there, done that. Those were wonderful places where you could, you know, hear Rhoda Scott, Jeffrey Scott, Sarah Vaughn, Dina Washington, you know, all of the wonderful, wonderful. County Basie used to come in here. What's the place by the. Oh all of the wonderful musicians.

Q: Do you remember listening to and/or seeing musicians perform jazz, gospel, or the blues and at what places?

Crump: All the time, and at the places, you know, certainly that I've mentioned. And some that I haven't.

Q: Did you ever engage in leisure time activities such as story telling, quilting, singing, gardening, movies, playing sports?

Crump: My favorite leisure time activity, I think as you well know is that I'm a tournament bridge player. And that's unusual again, for black folk people don't realize that here in the City of Newark there are hosts of African-Americans who play tournament bridge. And we, for whatever reason, given bridge to white people, you know, caucasian folk. That's true. Most people when you say bridge, they think of caucasians. But I'm proud to say that in the City of Newark there are hundreds of tournament bridge players who travel throughout the country and compete nationally and represent the City of Newark.

Q: We'd be more inclined to think about pinochle though.

Crump: Yes. We play that too.

Q: Than bridge.

Crump: Oh no, we play that too. I just played some the other day. In fact, our pastor is so

wonderful and is so forward thinking. I won't use the word liberal because it constitutes another connotation. But as forward thinking when I was really playing tournament bridge and I was traveling almost every other weekend. He would say to me, okay, I missed you at church. What tournament were you at? You know, that kind of thing. But Newark is famous nationwide for its tournament bridge players. And that's my favorite pastime.

Q: What do you remember or do you remember anything about the Newark Eagles? Did you attend any of their games? Were there other black athletic or sports events you attended? What materials do you have that might relate to any of those?

Crump: By the time I got to Newark, the negro baseball league, you know, was pretty much a thing of the past. But the interesting thing is I stopped in a store. No, I was at Jay's Restaurant, J.E.'s restaurant, everybody's restaurant, a couple of Sundays ago, and in walks this young man with this wonderful sweatshirt that said The Negro Baseball League, the Newark Eagles. I said to him where did you get that. I want to buy that for my son. Subsequently went to a store and saw it again and had ordered the sweatshirt for my son for Christmas. But, you know, that unfortunately, and it was our thing, and we lost it. You know, certainly the Negro Baseball League out of Detroit.

Q: What do you recall regarding the quote, unquote seamy side of black Newark.

Crump: Well, I can. Unfortunately, are we talking about the after hours clubs. I don't consider that too seamy.

Q: The girls who walk the streets, and etc., and etc.

Crump: Oh yes. I can honestly say I have only a political and passing interest and knowledge in what happened. I know that it does exist, but it exists, you know, in every community. Were some of my best friends, you know, hookers? Not to my knowledge.

Q: Do you recall any black gangsters?

Crump: No. I don't.

END SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO; BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE THREE

Q: Now to speak loud so it picks up your voice nice and clear. What do you recall regarding public education in Newark?

Crump: Well, believe it or not, I actually moved to Newark because of the school system. And because of its reputation nationwide. I think I mentioned to you earlier that when we were trying to decide from the list of towns that was supplied to us by the relocation committee, Newark came to mind because of Wickwake High School. And when my husband and I felt confident that we could rear our children in this town with what we had, with the knowledge that we had gathered about it, and also have a place for our children to learn, to receive a quality education. And that's another story. That was then and this is now.

Q: In general how well did black students seem to perform academically?

Crump: Early on, very well. Newark was a Mecca for the brightest and the best students in the State of New Jersey, and could be compared with anyone. With the decline in the system, that is no longer true. But I am grateful that it was true once upon a time.

Q: According to your perceptions, how were black students treated by white teachers?

Crump: Depending upon the time frame, I would say that the treatment of black students by white teachers mirrored that which was going on in the country. When times were good, teachers were good in terms of their approach and their attitude. When there was racial hostility and tenseness, that was mirrored in the classroom as well. Except for sports. In sports, they just happened to be

a class unto themselves.

Q: What was the general ratio of white to black teachers in Newark at that time?

Crump: Well, early on, believe it or not, the ratio, there was a great imbalance. There were more caucasians, probably more Jewish teachers, than any other group. Of course, that still may be true in a broader sense, but it's lessening and lessening. The gap is lessening greatly.

Q: Were black students involved in intramural sports and/ or extracurricular activities?

Crump: Definitely in sports. For whatever reason, white folks always thought we could run, jump higher and sing higher than anyone else. They forgot that we also had brains. And so it, I remember it being such a surprise to a lot of teachers that we could think as well and could compete at an academic level. Which we always knew was true anyway.

Q: Were there any black teachers particularly during your children's experience in the Newark schools, were there any outstanding teachers or any teachers that you thought you were?

Crump: I'm gonna mention some wonderful, wonderful educators. Geraldine Simms, the principal of Maple Avenue Annex, stands out in my mind clearly as by far one of the best administrators this city ever had. Lorraine Thurgood. I used to have a joke. In fact, it isn't a joke; it's true. I mentioned to you earlier that I have a God-given, that I have this ability to work with children whatever their disability or whatever age level. I used to say that the only teacher I knew who was better than Mildren Crump was Lorraine Thurgood. And she's just an outstanding educator. You can be a technician, a technician can take a book and teach from it. But a teacher is a whole different ballgame. Anybody can be a technician. A teacher is special. So there have been some wonderful, wonderful people who have come out of this system.

Q: What would you consider to be the five most important events or developments that have

occurred in Newark during your residence here? For instance, like strikes or particular political elections, a riot, fire, natural disasters, black immigration, all those kinds of things.

Crump: Certainly the 1967 racial disobedience, slash riot is always going to be a prominent factor in the history of the City of Newark. It's like a turning point. Demarcation point. There are, there are others. When I consider, oh the rich history of this city, kind of hard to name five.

Q: What about political elections?

Crump: Oh certainly the election of Mayor Kenneth Gibson was one. But even before that, the election of Irving Turner. And I'm just trying to think of another foothold that really affected the City of Newark.

Q: To what office was Irving Turner elected? [Phone ringing]

Crump: He was the first African-American councilperson in Newark. [Phone ringing and interruption] Sorry.

Q: He was the first elected councilperson in Newark. Okay, and then at that time we had like eight white councilpersons, all white men and no women at all on the council. How effective do you think Irving might have been on the council.

Crump: I'd say fairly effective. I mean, they didn't drum him out of business. You know what I mean. He really held his own. In terms of affecting substantive policy decisions and, he kept it before the consciousness of the council, and that's what we needed at the time.

Q: What kind of business? Do you know what kind of business he was in before he was elected?

Crump: No. I don't.



Q: I see. Okay. In what major ways has Newark changed since your first came here, and how do you view the changes that have occurred?

Crump: The unfortunate thing is that the changes that have occurred are not positive ones. There are pockets of positiveness, but if I were to assess it overall, it has to do with the decline in morality. For without morals and without a moral base, you have no ability to judge. And that I see as the greatest defeat of all and the greatest decline of all.

Q: Were there any traditions or celebrations that were common in Newark at that time that no longer exist?

Crump: None that I can think of. But I'm certain there are probably some of the older historians might be able to answer that question.

Q: Do you remember when the black history parade began?

Crump: Well, I was gonna mention that. That was back in nineteen, it was actually the Christmas Attics Parade. That was its original name. That was back in nineteen, oh fiddlesticks, in the 60s. I know that much.

Q: And is that parade, it's no longer held in Newark now?

Crump: Yes. It's still held in Newark. It's now called the Black, the African-American Heritage Day Parade. And last year, not last year, this year 1996 drew the largest crowd it's ever had.

Q: Oh really?

Crump: Yes.

Q: When do you feel black life in Newark reached its highest peak, what was so great about that particular time? When do you feel black life in Newark reached its lowest point, and what was so bad about that particular time?

Crump: Having arrived in Newark in 1965, after the spill over of the renaissance, the Harlem renaissance which took place in the 1930s and lasted for twenty-five years in terms of. Newark was the beneficiary of a lot of that. I still believe that in the mid-60s, Newark was still a role model for other parts of the state. The unfortunate aspect of it all is that as we were climbing, our ascent was cut off by the 1967 civil disobedience. And we've just not been able to grapple with the comeback after that. Where other communities have. Look at Cleveland. Look at Baltimore. Look at, I'm trying to think of the souther, more southerly towns.

Q: Atlanta.

Crump: Look at Atlanta. They've been able to bounce back.

Q: When do you feel black life in Newark reached its lowest point?

Crump: Probably right around now, and this is 1996. I never considered 1967 as a low point in the history. It was probably something that was naturally, that was evolutionary, that kind of had to take place. Like a boil that has to erupt. So for me that wasn't a low point. It was just an isolated incident. But the low point comes for me when I see people operating outside the confines of morality. And I see that now.

Q: So then you would say that Newark went into a period of decline immediately after the riots almost, and has continued until now.

Crump: The dissent has been most rapid within the last five years.

Q: I see.

Crump: We were hanging on.

Q: Now, did you know Louise Scott?

Crump: Yes. I do know her. Are you talking about the daughter?

Q: No. No. I'm talking about Madam Louise Scott.

Crump: I mean, I knew her, but I did not know her well. I know her daughter very well. Is there something in particular?

Q: No. I just wanted. If you knew her, what kind of person did you consider her to be.

Crump: I loved her style.

Q: Did you ever meet her in person?

Crump: Yes. Oh yes. I loved her style.

Q: When you say her style, what do you mean?

Crump: To know her is not to forget her. If you know what I mean. She was somebody you just didn't forget. And so is her daughter Louise.

Q: Yeah, I knew her daughter Louise. Louise and my children grew up together. They used to go to day camp together down at the Y. What was the community's perception of her and did you ever visit her home on High Street?

Crump: No. I did not. But the community's perception of her was that this was a great lady. She had accomplished much. The Krueger Mansion in and of itself provided her with a new level of mystique about her.

Q: What do you know about the High Street area in which the Krueger-Scott Mansion is located and did you or anyone you know work for any of the families in the High Street area?

Crump: No. No one that I knew of worked for any of the families. But the High Street area is a district that is rich in history. What we now know as the Citadel of Hope was originally a major place of worship for the Jewish faith. What we now know as, and I already mentioned, I think I mentioned it three times, but that's good. The old Kenney Hospital was right on that West Kinney corner. Unfortunately, they're tearing down some of those wonderful buildings for that mall. We didn't realize that we needed to conserve some of those, those rich old buildings in our haste to be modern. You know, we took away part of our history. In Europe and in Africa they revere a door, I mean, whatever the standing structure is. And we as Americans haven't learned to do this. So the building on the right. Oh, the orange brick building. I noticed it up for sale. I hope someone buys it.

Q: Do you know anything about any of the occupants of the mansion who preceded Mrs. Scott?

Crump: No I don't. I just know that they existed. I've seen the granddaughter or the great granddaughter, some relative, but at a ceremonial function.

Q: Did you or anyone you know work at any of the city's breweries?

Crump: No.

Q: How would you sum up your experience of living in Newark?

Crump: I wouldn't trade it for the world. I have an expression when people confront me when I used that term. They confront me with the fact that I'm not a native born Newarker. And I say, but I go you one step better, I adopted Newark. When you're biological you take what you get. When you adopt, you take what you want. And I wanted Newark. I had a love affair with the city ever since I moved here.

Q: If you had your life to live over, would you live in Newark and give me reasons for your answer?

Crump: I sure would. Okay, why would I live in Newark? I like the people. It's just busy enough, but not too busy. You know, it's not a New York City, but it's not a sleepy town either. It's somewhere right in the middle. I also like it because right now there's the opportunity for great change and great mobility. We just have, black folk, we just have to be ready to take advantage of it as well as take charge of it. And not let someone else define our own destiny.

Q: Well, Mrs. Crump that ends our interview. And again, let me just express my thanks to you for having come. I know what a busy person you are, and this has been an extreme pleasure for me to have you come to my home. And we do this interview together.

Crump: I want to thank you for inviting me. I've certainly enjoyed it. It's been my pleasure, and as I told you, I am the granddaughter of slaves, and who would have thought that my life story would be worthy of being recorded. So I am most grateful for that.

Q: Okay. Well thanks again and God bless you.

END OF INTERVIEW